

## Letters to the Editor . . .



### A Work in Progress

**To the Editor**—Colonel Matthew F. Bogdanos, USMC, of the National Strategic Gaming Center is to be congratulated for writing, and *JFQ* for printing, his article entitled “Joint Interagency Cooperation: The First Step” (Issue 37, 2d Quarter 2005). It is detailed, thoughtful, and enlightening. However, in the interest of historical accuracy and to encourage continued discussion on the subject of interagency coordination and the role of the Joint Interagency Coordination Group (JIACG) concept, I submit the following comments.

1) Central Command’s (CENTCOM’s) request to the Secretary of Defense in October 2001 to establish an interagency coordination cell was one of three from the Regional Combatant Commands (RCCs). Admiral Dennis Blair, USN (Ret.), then-Commander, U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM), had been exploring the idea of an interagency unit prior to 9/11. All of the regional combatant commands then created JIACGs, albeit of very different compositions.

2) The original idea for a JIACG (or as it was first named, JX) arose at the U.S. Joint Forces Command (JFCOM) annual exercise in June-July 2001. JFCOM later expanded the concept and published its White Paper in March 2002. This White Paper contains the concept of a “small interagency coordination staff element,” which Colonel Bogdanos so cavalierly dismisses. However, it was then and remains today only one of the possible types of JIACGs, as is CENTCOM’s. The JIACG concept is still in development and many of us working in the field believe it should remain open-ended so as to be adapted to differing situations. PACOM’s area of responsibility, for instance, is substantially different from CENTCOM’s, and the CENTCOM model is manifestly inappropriate—in size, scope, and mission—for PACOM.

3) All of the regional combatant commands have organized JIACGs, each very different, and the learning curve is high and productive. Many observers and participants believe that there are important distinctions—each equally valid depending on the situation—between different possible types of JIACGs. The most important are those between “full spectrum JIACGs” and “subject specific or focused JIACGs” such as those designated to work on the war on terror. Another distinction is between policy JIACGs and operation coordination (functional) JIACGs. The JIACG role in campaign planning can vary: PACOM’s JIACG, for instance, was tasked to be the primary drafter for the Command’s Campaign Plan for Combating Terrorism. Obviously there are conceivable variations on these themes, including combinations. The appropriate location and reporting responsibilities of a JIACG within an RCC will depend on the answer to these considerations.

In sum, the subject and the concept are much more open to discussion and exploration than Colonel Bogdanos’ article implies. The JIACG concept is not a

panacea for solving the interagency coordination question: it is an organizational innovation for improving the ability of the Regional Combatant Commands to reach out to the other agencies, improve its “situational awareness” with respect to other departments, improve its ability to coordinate internally (an often overlooked matter: stovepipes exist within the RCCs), and better manage operations for which it has the lead—for example, wars and humanitarian operations. The trickier question is how to improve interagency coordination within the interagency community situations where the RCC is a supporting player to another agency or only one player in the larger U.S. Government interagency community, for instance in the war on terror in the Asia-Pacific area, and how to structure and use JIACGs for that purpose.

I must also disagree with Colonel Bogdanos in his statement that one major challenge facing JIACGs is the lack of a single, national-level organization issuing guidance, managing competing policies, and directing agency participation in the JIACGs. That organization exists and is called the National Security Council, as the author himself implies later in his article by calling on the council to enforce interagency coordination.

With these caveats in mind, Colonel Bogdanos’ article is recommended to all as an important contribution to the ongoing experiment in interagency coordination called the JIACG concept. For those interested in the subject, I suggest they review the history and subsequent development of Presidential Decision Document 56, signed in 1977, on managing complex emergencies, U.S. Joint Forces Command White Paper “A Concept for Improving U.S. Interagency Operational Planning and Coordination” and subsequent JFCOM documents, and the PACOM-authored article in *JFQ* issue 32, Autumn 2002, “The Global War on Terrorism: A Regional Approach to Coordination.”

—Ambassador (Ret.) Edward Marks  
Contractor, Camber Corporation  
State Department Consultant  
J3-JIACG-CT  
U.S. Pacific Command

**To the Editor**—I have been on active duty in the Air Force for almost 17 years. My family and I have traveled all over the world and made sacrifices that no one but the military community can understand. It wasn’t until I started working at the FSC (Family Support Center) that I realized how much this organization contributes to military retention every day. I wish Ms. Leyva would have talked to family members here at Laughlin or any of the FSCs throughout the world that have taken advantage of the many programs/events we provide to support our troops and their families.

For example, periodically the bases hire a contractor to perform a community needs assessment to gauge the climate within the base community. Our last assessment showed a dissatisfaction with local (Del Rio, TX) employment for spouses. We advocated/garnered funds (an approximately \$4K grant) from the AF Aid Society and bought over 150 Staffcentrix Virtual Assistant kits to battle the spouse employment problem. The FSC

sent a staff member to Staffcentrix training and began to train spouses on starting their own businesses over the Internet.

In another example, the FSCs are mandated to provide transition assistance to individuals who are within 180 days of separation or retirement. We, like many other FSCs, have exceeded this function by adding a course that targets individuals within 4–5 years of retirement or over 180 days of separation. We bring in subject matter experts from the Veterans Administration, TRICARE, financial institutions, and other organizations to provide assistance and advice during the transition from military to civilian life.

Still another example: Our FSC started a VIN Etching Program to protect/deter would-be thieves from choosing Laughlin AFB's vehicles. The results have been spectacular; many personnel have saved 15–20 percent on their automobile insurance.

One more example. Too often the base welcome videos located at the FSCs are outdated. We are currently developing a simple PowerPoint Relocation "Welcome to Laughlin Presentation" with Voice-over. This presentation will provide up-to-date information and assist families during future relocations to not only Laughlin, but many other DOD bases.

I hope I have given you enough information to print some great stories of what the FSCs can do. I think I can speak for many of the FSCs when I say that we will continue to challenge ourselves every day and tell ourselves, *we can do more!*

—MSgt Rufino Gonzalez, USAF  
Superintendent, Family Support Center  
Laughlin Air Force Base, Texas

*MSgt Gonzalez has provided some useful examples of his Family Support Center helping the military community at Laughlin Air Force Base in creative ways. As he writes, however, we can do more.*

—Editor, JFQ

**To the Editor**—I am appalled. My major concerns with "Transforming the 'Retention Sector'" by Meredith Leyva (JFQ issue 38, 3d Quarter 2005) are:

■ She uses Employee Assistance Program (EAP) references in line with Family Support Center operations.

■ She does not refer to the Air Force web site [www.afcrossroads.com](http://www.afcrossroads.com) that has monitored chat rooms for spouses and youth and military members to network globally on all military life issues. The website has outstanding relocation support and links.

■ She speaks of hiring spouses to work in the Family Support Centers because they know the lifestyle. As a 12-year Human Services professional in the civilian non-profit agency realm and in the Civil Service serving U.S. Air Force Family Support Centers, I know people closest to a problem or situation or lifestyle are *not* the best people to provide objective, educated service.

■ The author does not mention "Heart Link," an Air Force program in operation since 2001 that educates new spouses on the military, accessing services, and understanding mission requirements.

I would urge Ms. Leyva to contact some of the Family Support Center personnel who have successfully implemented Virtual assistant training, small business seminars, resume classes, Federal job Info, job boards, customer service training, etc.

I will be the first to say there are areas where Family Support Centers need to improve their knowledge and services. I am proud to serve my country by utilizing my professional education, training, and experience to strengthen the military member and family's life coping skills.

—Vicki Jay Lokken, DAFC  
Community Readiness Consultant  
Family Support Center  
Grand Forks Air Force Base, North Dakota

*The Commentary article by Ms. Leyva may have some controversial points, but the impact of families on recruiting and retention—in America's all volunteer force—cannot be denied. JFQ will certainly consider for publication research on quality of life, retention, and readiness issues that directly impact professional military and security studies.*

—Editor, JFQ

## New in JFQ

The NDU Press staff will use this information block to inform readers of particularly noteworthy features or new items in each issue of *Joint Force Quarterly*.

This issue is replete with firsts. The first is the topic of the forum, "Logistics and Support." This is a subject never before emphasized in a JFQ forum. The theme cuts across service, interagency, and international stovepipes. Readers will find a wide variety of useful subjects, from industry, to tsunami relief, to acquisition, to strategic gaming.

Winners of the 2005 Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Strategic Essay Contest are showcased in this issue for the first time. The goal of publishing the winning essays in a special feature is to enhance debate on strategic security issues while giving wider access to some of the best research by senior officers and civilians in the U.S. Armed Forces joint professional military education system.

Another prominent first in this issue is the premiere of the Interagency Dialogue series. Although JFQ has published articles on subjects of interest to a broad interagency community as well as essays by authors employed by various Government agencies, there has been insufficient emphasis on information sharing among agencies in creating and executing the Nation's security policy and strategy. The Interagency Dialogue series will feature articles written by and for the interagency community every quarter. Its goal is to foster interagency understanding and situational awareness and to elevate the debate over blending instruments of national power in the defense of America, its interests, and its allies.

The JFQ staff welcomes feedback on these new features. Please send an email to [JFQ1@ndu.edu](mailto:JFQ1@ndu.edu) or see our Web site to find a simple feedback form at [ndupress.ndu.edu](http://ndupress.ndu.edu).

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